

## CASE 4

### The Art Box

Except for Lilly, who has suddenly lost her art box, all of Mr. King's third graders are in line and ready to go to Ms. Wilson's art class. Lilly checks her backpack but finds it empty. She doesn't remember taking her art supplies home, but she must have, because her markers, scissors, colored pencils, and glue are nowhere to be found. Finally giving up, Lilly runs to join her friends at the end of the line. After she and her father have looked everywhere at home yet still have found no sign of the art box, Lilly tells Mr. King that her art supplies are missing. Mr. King mentions the situation to the class, suggests that maybe someone accidentally picked up the wrong box, and asks that all of the children look carefully inside their desks. None of the children finds either the box or its contents.

Over the weekend, Lilly and her father go shopping to replace the supplies she has lost. After arriving back home, Lilly's father painstakingly writes "Lilly" on each new item with a black, permanent marker. Yet by Thursday of the following week, Lilly cannot find the crayons and bottle of glue her father has recently purchased. She assures Mr. King that she has kept her supplies in her art box and that the box has remained in her desk the entire week. Mr. King doesn't know what to make of the situation but is beginning to think that Lilly is either very forgetful or very disorganized. And when Lilly's father has to buy yet another round of art supplies for his daughter, he is not at all pleased.

A few weeks later, Lilly sees Anne using a bottle of glue with the name "Lilly" written on it. Lilly confronts her classmate. "Where did you get that glue?"

"My mom bought it for me," Anne replies.

"Then how come it has my name written on it?" Lilly asks.

"Cause my sister's name is Lilly and we share everything."

"I don't believe you. I'm tellin' the teacher."

After listening to Lilly's complaint, Mr. King confronts Anne. "Honey, where did you get that bottle of glue?"

"My mom gave it to me and my sister, Lilly."

"Are you sure?" asks Mr. King.

"Yes," Anne replies. "My mom always gives me things, 'cause she loves me."

"I sec." Mr. King pauses, then adds, "I think it's time the two of you get back to work."

Suspecting that Anne is being dishonest, Mr. King sifts through the contents of Anne's desk while the class is at recess. He finds two art boxes with Lilly's name on them several boxes of crayons marked with various children's initials, an assortment of glue bottles, and a "Colorado Rockies" pen in the shape of a baseball bat that he's pretty sure belongs to Owen. Leaving these items where he's found them, Mr. King calls Anne's parents and requests a conference immediately after school. Just before the final bell, Mr. King informs Anne that her parents are coming to pick her up and asks her to stay in her seat until they arrive.

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"What's this about?" says Anne's father, Mr. Walker, as he ignores Mr. King's outstretched hand. "I had to cancel several clients at the office to come to this meeting."

"I'm delighted to finally meet you both," Mr. King responds. "I'm also grateful that you were able to come on such short notice. Perhaps we can sit at the reading table over here. I apologize for the size of the chairs. They're meant for six-year-olds rather than adults, I'm afraid."

Once Anne and her parents have taken their seats at the table, Mr. King continues. "This may seem like a strange question, but I would like to know if you have another daughter-one named Lilly."

"Lilly?" Ms. Walker seems puzzled. "No, Anne is our only child."

"You called me away from the office to ask if we have another *daughter*?"

Mr. Walker asks angrily.

Mr. King tries to keep his composure. "Well, over the past few weeks, a number of my students have found items missing from their desks. This afternoon, I found most of them in Anne's desk." He pauses to see if either Anne or one of her parents has anything to say at this point, but all three are silent. "I can't seem to get a straight answer from Anne as to how other children's things have ended up in her desk. I was hoping that maybe...if we could get together to talk about it...we could figure out what's going on."

Mr. Walker stands up, clearly uncomfortable with Mr. King's implied accusation. He turns to his daughter and says, "Okay, Anne, let's go take a look at your desk." Anne leads the way, and the three adults follow. When Anne opens her desk, several items marked "Lilly" are lying in plain sight.

Mr. Walker is obviously taken aback at the discovery. "So how'd these things get in your desk, Anne?" he asks.

"Kids gave them to me so I'd be their friend," Anne replies tentatively as she looks down at the floor.

Mr. Walker turns to Mr. King. "There you have it, Mr. King. My daughter knows I expect her to obey rules like not stealing and lying. Don't you, Anne?"

When Anne nods in agreement, he continues, "If she says the other kids gave them to her, then they gave them to her."

Mr. King looks Anne directly in the eye. "Anne, didn't you tell me these things belonged to your sister Lilly?"

"Like my wife said earlier, Anne doesn't have a sister Lilly!" Mr. Walker barks.

Mr. King is firm. "Tell your parents what you told me earlier, Anne."

"I said my *friend*, Lilly, gave me her art boxes and some of her crayons and glue. You just didn't listen, Mr. King."

"Hmmm...", Mr. King responds pensively. "I think...."

Mr. Walker rudely interrupts. "She says she didn't take that stuff. It's not her fault that she's so popular. She obeys me at home-no stealing and no lying. Why should she be different in school? Sure, sometimes she's a little brat, but what kid isn't?" Mr. Walker speaks as if Anne weren't even in the room. The Art Box 11

Ms. Walker reaches out and pulls her daughter toward her in a protective embrace. "She's just a little girl. What if she did take that stuff...?"

"She didn't!" screams Mr. Walker.

"It's just some crayons and pencils. Altogether it can't be worth more than five dollars," Ms. Walker suggests. "Why should she be punished if none of the items was destroyed?"

"I'm afraid that you both are missing the point here," Mr. King responds. "Lilly, one of the other children in my class, has had to replace her art supplies twice now because they've suddenly disappeared, and then today I find Lilly's possessions in Anne's desk."

"How do you know Lilly didn't just give these things to Anne?!" demands Mr. Walker.

"Well, for one thing, several weeks ago Lilly told me that her art box was missing. It seems unlikely that she would tell me that if she knew she had given it to Anne."

Mr. Walker responds angrily. "So you're taking *her* word over my daughter's? I expect Anne to follow my rules, and I think she does. How do we know that Lilly isn't lying? Where are *her* parents? Why isn't she being called on the carpet the way Anne is right now?"

"But look at the evidence in her desk. The items are clearly labeled with other children's names. Anne can't possibly be completely innocent...."

"Leave my daughter out of this!" Mr. Walker screams. "I expect you to set an example for my child. You should have had all of the facts before you went accusing someone of such a horrible crime. Come on, Anne, let's go home. Mr. King needs to think about what he has done!" Mr. King watches in total frustration as the

Walkers leave his classroom in a huff.

NOTE: Throughout her school career, Anne continued to take no responsibility for her actions, nor were her parents ever willing to admit their daughter's wrongdoings.

*Possible questions for "The Art Box":*

**1. From the perspective of Kohlberg's theory of moral development, how might you characterize Anne's behavior?**

**2. Researchers such as Baumrind (1971) and Maccoby and Martin (1983) believe that parents display different styles (i.e., authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and uninvolved) for rearing their children. What type of parenting style does Mr. Walker exhibit?**

**3. What type of parenting style does Ms. Walker exhibit?**